

**DIVISION-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW**  
**Monitoring School Division Compliance with**  
**Certain Standards of Quality**  
**Related to Increasing Educational Performance**

**AUTHORITY FOR CONDUCTING DIVISION-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEWS**

The Board of Education's authority for supervising the public school system in Virginia is vested in Article VIII of Virginia's Constitution. Section two of Article VIII states, in part:

“Standards of quality for the several school divisions shall be determined and prescribed from time to time by the Board of Education, subject to revision only by the General Assembly.”

Section four of Article VIII states, in part:

“The general supervision of the public school system shall be vested in a Board of Education...”

Section five of Article VIII states, in part:

“The powers and duties of the Board of Education shall be as follows: (a) Subject to such criteria and conditions as the General Assembly may prescribe, the Board shall divide the Commonwealth into school divisions of such geographical area and school-age population as will promote the realization of the prescribed standards of quality, and shall periodically review the adequacy of existing school divisions for this purpose.”

The *Standards of Quality* (SOQ) (22.1-253.13:1, et. seq.) describe the responsibilities of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in supervising school divisions. One responsibility is as follows:

“The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall assist local school boards in the implementation of action plans for increasing educational performance in those school divisions and schools that are identified as not meeting the approved criteria. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor the implementation of and report to the Board of Education on the effectiveness of the corrective actions taken to improve the educational performance in such school divisions and schools” (22.1-253.13:3.D).

Revisions to the SOQ were introduced into and passed by the 2004 General Assembly. Revisions addressing the conducting of division-level academic reviews are:

“Each local school board shall maintain schools that are fully accredited pursuant to the standards of accreditation as prescribed by the Board of Education...When the Board of Education has obtained evidence through the school academic

review process that the failure of schools within a division to achieve full accreditation status is related to division level failure to implement the Standards of Quality, the Board may require a division level academic review. After the conduct of such review and within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan, consistent with criteria established by the Board and setting forth specific actions and a schedule designed to ensure that schools within its school division achieve full accreditation status. Such corrective action plans shall be part of the relevant school divisions' six-year improvement plan pursuant to 22.1-253.13:6" (22.1-253.13:3.F); and

"The Board of Education shall have authority to seek school division compliance with the foregoing standards of quality. When the Board of Education determines that a school division has failed or refused, and continues to fail or refuse, to comply with any such standard, the Board may petition the circuit court having jurisdiction in the school division to mandate or otherwise enforce compliance with such standard, including the development or implementation of any required corrective action plan that a local school board has failed or refused to develop or implement in a timely manner" (22.1-253.13:6.C).

#### IDENTIFICATION OF SCHOOL DIVISIONS FOR WHICH DIVISION-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEWS MAY BE REQUIRED

The Board of Education may direct the Department of Education to conduct Divisions-Level Academic Reviews in school divisions meeting the following criteria:

1. The school division has not made adequate yearly progress in the same content area for two consecutive years, as described in *Virginia's Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook* and consistent with the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*; AND
2. the percent of students attending warned schools in the division is higher than the statewide percent of students attending warned schools; AND
3. the Board of Education has obtained evidence through the school academic review process that the failure of schools within a division to achieve full accreditation status is related to division level failure to implement the Standards of Quality, consistent with 22.1-253.13:3.F of the 2004 *Standards of Quality*

#### PURPOSE OF THE DIVISION-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW

The *Standards of Quality* (22.1-253.13:1, et. seq.), or SOQ, is the section of the Virginia Code that describes the responsibilities of state Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the department of education and the local school board in increasing the educational performance of public schools in Virginia. The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131-10, et .seq.), or SOA, are the Board of Education's regulations that operationally define various sections of the Standards of Quality by detailing the standards schools must meet.

The purposes of the division-level academic review are to:

- 1) gather data and other information to determine whether the local school board meeting its responsibilities under the SOQ (see Table 1);
- 2) provide the local school board with essential actions upon which they will base goals and strategies for correcting any areas of noncompliance with the SOQ and for improving educational performance as part of the required corrective action plan (22.1-253.13:3.F); and
- 3) monitor, enforce and report on the local school board's development and implementation of the required corrective action plan.

Table 1: Local school board responsibilities under the Standards of Quality reviewed during the Division-Level Academic Review and correlated to the SOA

2004 Code Cite	Text	SOQ-SOA Cross-Reference Chart
22.1-253.13:1B	“School boards shall implement these objectives [the Standards of Learning] or objectives specifically designed for their school divisions that are equivalent to or exceed the Board’s requirements”	1
22.1-253.13:1.C	“Local school boards shall develop and implement a program of instruction for grades K through 12 that emphasizes [described]...”	2
22.1-253.13:1.C	“Local school boards shall also develop and implement programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation for students who ...fail to achieve a passing score on any Standards of Learning assessment in grades three through eight or who fail an end-of-course test required for the award of a verified unit of credit required for the student’s graduation”	3
22.1-253.13:1.D	“Local school boards shall also implement ...2. Programs based on prevention, intervention, or remediation designed to increase the number of students who earn a high school diploma ... 11... provision of instructional strategies and reading practices that benefit the development of reading skills for all students.”	3
22.1-253.13:1.D	“Local boards shall also implement ...8. A plan to make achievements for students who are educationally at risk a divisionwide priority which shall include procedures for measuring the progress of such students.”	4
22.1-253.13:2.C	“Each school board shall assign licensed instructional personnel in a manner that ...”	5
22.1-253.13:2.M	“A combined school, ... shall meet at all grade levels the staffing requirements for the highest grade level in that school;...except for guidance counselors,...based on the school’s total enrollment;...”	5
22.1-253.13:2.P	“Each local school board shall provide those support services which are necessary for the ... operation and maintenance of its public schools ... ‘support services’ shall include services provided by school board members; the superintendent; ...”	5
22.1-253.13:3.F	“Each local school board shall maintain schools that are fully accredited pursuant to the standards of accreditation as prescribed by the Board of Education.”	2
22.1-253.13:3.F	“To assess the educational progress of students as individuals and as groups, each local school board shall	7

2004 Code Cite	Text	SOQ-SOA Cross-Reference Chart
	require the administration of appropriate assessments, which ... shall include the Standards of Learning Assessments.”	
22.1-253.13:3.F	“... After the conduct of such [division-level academic review], ... each school board shall submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan ... [that] shall be part of the relevant school division’s six-year plan...”	6
22.1-253.13:5.D	“Each local school board shall require (i) its members to participate annually in high quality professional development programs on personnel, curriculum and current issues in education ... and (ii) the division superintendent to participate annually in high quality professional development at the local, state or national levels”	8
22.1-253.13:5.E	“Each local school board shall provide a program of high quality professional development (i) in the use and documentation of performance standards and evaluation criteria based on student academic progress and skill for teachers and administrators...(ii) as part of the license renewal process...(iii) in educational technology for all instructional personnel ... (iv) for administrative personnel designed to increase proficiency in instructional leadership ...”	8
22.1-253:13.6.B	“Each local school board shall revise, extend and adopt biennially a divisionwide six-year plan ... A report shall be presented by each school board to the public by November 1 of each odd-numbered year on the extent to which the objectives of the divisionwide six-year plan have been met...”	6
22.1-253:13.6.C	“Each public school shall prepare a biennial plan, which shall be given consideration by its school board in the development of the divisionwide six-year improvement plan	6

## PROCESS

Teams of educators trained and experienced in the Academic Review process conduct initial visits, on-site reviews, and follow-up visits. During these visits, teams hold introductory meetings with local school boards, conduct interviews, review documents and self-studies, and observe operational practices. Teams collect and analyze data, and these data are used to prepare a series of reports. Specific types of visits and activities conducted are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of visits and activities associated with Division-level Academic Reviews.

Visit Type	Activities Include But Are Not Limited To	Result
Initial Visit	Provide written explanation of purpose, process, roles and responsibilities to school division staff and local board chair Discuss preliminary issues Share analyses of findings of school-level academic reviews conducted in division Assign self-studies for completion prior to next visit Obtain signed agreement Hold introductory meeting with local school board to explain purpose and process, directed by Superintendent of Public Instruction, President of the Board of Education, and/or their designees Local board takes official action to accept memorandum of agreement	Identify SOQ focus for review  Establish dates for On-Site Review
On-Site Review	Interview superintendent, central office staff and up to 2 board members Observe operations and practices Analyze documents, data Assign additional tasks for completion prior to next visit	Report of Findings detailing areas of strength, areas of noncompliance with SOQ, essential actions and timeframes to be incorporated into corrective action plan
Follow-up Visits	Gather data to determine degree of implementation of essential actions designed to increase educational performance Monitor and enforce development and implementation of corrective action plans designed to bring the division into compliance with the SOQ	Cumulative Progress Report detailing degree of progress in developing and implementing corrective actions

Reports that are generated are given to the division superintendent and staff and to the local school board chair and are to be made public. Copies also remain with the department of education's division of educational accountability, with distribution to the Board of Education.

School divisions will develop corrective action plans for improving student achievement and for correcting any areas of noncompliance based upon the findings of

the division-level academic review. Plans must be part of the divisions' six-year plans required by the SOQ, must be approved by local school divisions and must be submitted to the Board of Education for approval within 30 business days of the on-site visit. The division superintendent and local school board chair may request an extension to the due date of the corrective action plan for good cause. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, severe weather conditions and other emergency situations presenting a threat to the health or safety of students. In making such a request, the superintendent and local school board chair must appear before the Board of education detailing the rationale for the request and providing evidence that such a delay will not have an adverse impact upon student achievement. The Board will consider granting such requests on a case-by-case basis.

Findings from these reviews will be reported quarterly to the Board of Education. Findings related to issues of noncompliance will be reported more frequently. Any school division not implementing essential actions, not correcting areas of noncompliance, or failing to develop, submit, and implement required plans and status reports will be required to report its lack of action directly to the Board of Education. Areas of noncompliance that continue to go uncorrected will be reported in the Board of Education's Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly on the Condition and Needs of Public Schools in Virginia. The Board will take additional action as allowable under the SOQ, including petitioning the circuit court having jurisdiction in the school division to mandate or otherwise enforce compliance with the standards (22.1-253.13:6.C, Revised, 2004).